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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 001315

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [IR](#) [MASS](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: MALIKI ON IRAN WEAPONS SMUGGLING, CURRENT MILITARY
CAMPAIGNS, STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, AND NEIGHBOR'S CONFERENCE

REF: 07BAGHDAD 2930

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: During his weekly security meeting on April 24 with the Ambassador and MNF-I Commanding General Petraeus, Prime Minister Maliki said he would privately confront Iran with evidence about its supplying weapons to criminal elements in Iraq. He said the delegation would depart for Tehran within the next few days. He declined to move forward on a joint USG-GOI press conference on Monday about these weapons, preferring to wait for the Iranian reaction before proceeding publicly. Regarding the current security situation, Maliki assessed Basrah and Sadr City as improving but acknowledged the pressing need for restoring essential services. Despite General Petraeus' warning that the Basrah operation was not complete and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in Ninewa province lacked sufficient strength, the Prime Minister clearly stated his desire to initiate a decisive showdown with al-Qaeda (AQI) in early May in Mosul.

12. (S) Summary cont. Concerning the Strategic Framework (SF), Maliki outlined the tentative composition of the GOI negotiating team and reiterated his desire for a single, all-encompassing agreement. The Prime Minister expressed mixed feelings about the just-concluded Neighbors Conference in Kuwait. He noted the increasingly positive diplomatic environment with neighboring Arab states, but lamented their reticence in appointing ambassadors to Baghdad. Additional discussions covered requests by U.S. electricity production companies for GOI underwriting of business insurance against nationalization, methodologies that Iraq needed to follow to make the U.S. Foreign Military Sales program more effective, the need to appoint Iraqi ambassadors and concerns presented to Maliki about the security of Iraq's Christian minority.
END SUMMARY.

Iranian Weapons Smuggling to Iraqi Militias

13. (S) In a two-hour, wide-ranging discussion with Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, Prime Minister Maliki acknowledged mounting evidence that Iran continues to supply medium and heavy weapons to criminal elements inside Iraq. In response to this threat, Maliki told us he intends to send a delegation to Tehran within the coming days to privately deliver proof in the form of documents, confessions, and photographs to senior religious leaders--possibly including Supreme Leader Khamenei (Note: According to National Security Advisor Rubaie on April 27, the delegation has not yet departed Baghdad. End Note.) Maliki said the delegation would come from the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) coalition but lamented that Abdel Aziz had already turned down an offer to

lead it. Maliki also confided that during private discussions in Kuwait last week, Iranian ForMin Mottaki had denied--as expected--any involvement in supplying weapons to Iraqi militias, despite evidence to the contrary.

14. (S) Maliki said he agreed with General Petraeus that the Iranian government leadership probably knew the entire truth about the weapons smuggling since they had also acquiesced to the training of hundreds, maybe thousands, of Iraqi criminals and terrorists by their Qods forces. The Ambassador stressed how Iran could not have it both ways, publicly supporting the Government while privately supporting militias threatening its very survival. He urged Maliki to send a very strong signal to Iran and hoped this delegation would be up to the task. Maliki answered, "I swear to God I will not allow them (Iran) to destroy this government." When the ambassador proposed a joint USG-GOI press briefing to highlight their concerns about these weapons, Maliki insisted on first gauging the Iranian reaction to his delegation before making the matter public. (Comment: In September 2007, per reftel, Maliki told us that Supreme Leader Khamenei had personally promised to stop Qods Force activity inside Iraq. End Comment.)

Syria: What Kind of Threat?

15. (S) Regarding Iraq's other problematic neighbor, Maliki accused Syria of smuggling similar weapons into Iraq as those found in Basrah. While General Petraeus agreed Syria posed a threat, he did not support the contention about their providing these type of weapons, explaining that overwhelming evidence showed these RPG-29s, 240mm rockets, and explosively

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formed projectiles (EFPs) came exclusively from Iranian sources. The far more serious threat from Syria, he insisted, was from foreign fighters, suicide bombers, and terrorist financiers. Although Maliki acknowledged these threats, he continued to cite his own intelligence sources regarding Syrian arms smuggling.

Basrah and Sadr City Security

16. (S) Turning to the internal security situation in Iraq, Maliki expressed satisfaction with ongoing military operations in Basrah and Sadr City, but acknowledged problems in providing essential services to each. General Petraeus agreed and urged the Prime Minister to greatly accelerate funding for essential services and jobs creation. Petraeus noted that Maliki's aid coordinator in Basrah, Deputy Justice Minister Safa, was busy studying the problem and had spent none of the promised \$100 million in GOI aid money which was necessary in securing continued public support.

17. (S) When the Ambassador asked about next steps in Sadr City, Maliki cited the most pressing military requirement as securing the perimeter, which will include closing of most side roads, setting up barriers, establishing checkpoints at key transit routes, and maintaining a strong police presence within Baghdad. He reiterated the non-negotiable government positions: surrender of all medium/heavy weapons, surrender of JAM members on GOI wanted-lists, JAM pledges to cease attacks on government ministries, and non-interference with police forces (who should have free reign to search, arrest, and detain suspected residents). The bottom-line demand, he said, was dissolution of the JAM as a militia force. In reply to the Ambassador's question on the possibility of forming an "awakening" movement in Sadr City, Maliki said he preferred working with the existing "support councils" made up of local tribal leadership, but was open to employing members of those same tribes to reconstitute the Sadr City police.

Maliki Renews Call for Decisive Operation in Mosul

¶18. (S) General Petraeus reported that AQI was continuing its attacks on ISF and Coalition Forces (CF) in Mosul constructing security checkpoints and combat outposts around the city, but that CF and ISF operations are chipping away at the AQI structure there. He also noted CF progress interdicting AQI supply lines in the Jazeera Desert, southwest of Mosul. Special operations forces were also busy, he added, but before deploying additional ISOF they would need more actionable intelligence to make such a deployment worthwhile. Highlighting the sensitivities of using Kurdish Peshmerga forces in Mosul operations, General Petraeus suggested using them in Baghdad to provide backfill for ISF units that could then deploy to Ninewa. Summarizing, General Petraeus described the upcoming campaign as a long, hard effort in the North.

¶19. (S) Maliki responded--as he has done at every recent meeting on the subject--by acknowledging the current campaign plan, but pressing hard for a major push now. He described this decisive battle as an important psychological blow which was needed now to "break AQI's back" and give the people of Mosul a sense of freedom. Maliki insisted that enough military forces were available to start the operation by the beginning of May. General Petraeus cautioned that Basra operations were still ongoing. He also reminded Maliki that four brigades had been stripped from Anbar for transfer to Basrah, Baghdad, and southwest Ninewa/Salah ad Din operations, leaving only two, and making it a tempting target for AQI's return.

¶10. (S) When Maliki retorted there were 21 ISF battalions available in Ninewa, General Petraeus responded that those units were fighting hard and the police in Ninewa were understrength. General Petraeus noted that if it wasn't for the Iranian rockets in Baghdad, Maliki would have the forces for Mosul that he wanted. Maliki was undeterred, saying he it was necessary to deal the "death blow" now. Maliki proposed sending the National Police Quick Reaction Force (QRF) Battalion and an Iraqi Special Operations Battalion to Mosul. General Petraeus said that was doable and, although it was the final reserve available to the PM, he'd work the plans with the Iraqi ministries. (Comment: Maliki's continued insistence on initiating decisive military operations in Ninewa in early May, coupled with his planned trip there at

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the same time, is a clear signal of his intention to execute the plan on his own timetable. End comment.)

Strategic Framework

¶11. (S) Turning to the Strategic Framework (SF), Maliki strongly reiterated his desire for a single, stand-alone agreement that includes all negotiated components. As he had agreed in Kuwait, however, there would be two negotiating tracks, one "technical" for the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and one "political" for the SF. Maliki noted that the Executive Council had just agreed to appoint a "follow-up committee" consisting of one representative or deputy to each of the five parties represented by the political leaders in the Executive Council. Those five - Rowsh Shaways or Hoshyar Zebari for Barzan/KDP; Barham Saleh or Fouad Massoum for Talabani/PUK; Ayad Sammaraie for Tariq al-Hashimi/IIP; Hadi al-Amari or Humam Hammoudi for Adel Abd al-Mehdi/ISCI; Ali al-Dib or Haydar Abadi or Sadiq Rikabi/Dawa factions - plus Deputy ForMin Hammoud (to ensure coordination with the SOFA negotiations) would be the follow-up committee members. The Ambassador encouraged Maliki to move swiftly to initiate negotiations.

Neighbors Conference

¶12. (S) The Prime Minister told the Ambassador he was

generally pleased with the just-concluded Neighbors Conference in Kuwait, noting an improvement in the atmospherics with his Arab neighbors. He lamented, however, their reticence at appointing ambassadors and establishing embassies in Baghdad. He expressed particular concern about Saudi Arabia, which seemed to send mixed signals. The Ambassador and General Petraeus urged Maliki to continue his outreach with speeches, visits, release of reconcilable detainees, but most importantly, by taking the first step and appointing Iraqi ambassadors to Saudi Arabia and the other Arab countries. In that vein, the Ambassador asked Maliki if the Executive Council had agreed on the long-awaited list of new ambassadors and deputy government ministers. Maliki replied that they had reached agreement on most names which the Government would submit shortly to the Council of Representatives (CoR); in agreement with the CoR, names and positions still in contention could be submitted at a later date.

¶13. (S) Maliki described relations with Kuwait as good and getting better, but noted many tough issues on the horizon including borders, the 1990 War compensation lawsuits against the Iraqi state airline, and combined oil fields. He said the "nice words" at the Neighbors Conference would now be judged by positive actions. Maliki expressed optimism that Kuwait had agreed to talk on a number of topics, adding that Iraq would soon push forward negotiations on their priority issues of combined oil fields, the boundary at the Umm Qasr port, and delineation of waterway boundaries.

Producing More Electricity

¶14. (S) General Petraeus reported increasing interest of some U.S. investors in establishing business operations in Iraq. He mentioned a developing proposal to build a power plant near Kirkuk in partnership with a southern California utility. He noted that an investor had expressed concern, however, that electricity production--as an essential public service--might be subject to nationalization. General Petraeus said reluctant investors could be reassured if they could purchase "political insurance" in which potential losses resulting from the nationalization of an industry would be underwritten by the GOI. (Note: A U.S. investor is working with the Min of Finance to help develop a political insurance fund. End Note.) On other electricity alternatives, Maliki expressed interest in the GOI purchasing electricity from private sector companies. General Petraeus advised Maliki to look at Turkish companies along the border which have excess capacity, the Ambassador also suggested that Maliki discuss with the KRG. Maliki agreed to consider these suggestions.

Foreign Military Sales (FMS)

¶15. (S) Returning to the issue of sustaining required

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military forces and equipment, General Petraeus asked the Prime Minister to push hard for cabinet decisions on multiple FMS cases. Petraeus added that Commander of the Multi-National Security Transition Command in Iraq (MNSTC-I) would provide an extensive briefing this week at the Ministerial Council on National Security (MCNS) about the FMS system, in general, and about these cases, in particular. Maliki said he was looking forward to hearing the brief.

Reaching Out to the Christian Community

¶16. (S) Noting concern over attacks on the Christian community in Iraq, the Ambassador urged and the Prime Minister to personally meet with community and Iraqi Christian church leaders and discuss their security concerns. Maliki stated his intent was to arm them so they could

protect their own churches. General Petraeus noted that merely arming the Christians to defend churches could expose Christians to even greater violence. Ambassador Crocker added that the situation in Baghdad was more complicated than in Ninewa. Maliki agreed to consider their recommendations.

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